A study of life skills, learning abilities, and career planning of Chinese college students

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Abstract

The comprehensive quality of college students encompasses essential components such as life skills, learning ability, and career planning. Proficiency in these areas is crucial for their successful adaptation to society and effective navigation through challenges and changes. This study examined the life skills, learning ability, and career planning of 425 undergraduate students from China. The research findings revealed a high level of competence among respondents in various life skills, with collaborative learning ability ranking first among the indicators. Furthermore, corrective feedback on career planning emerged as the most influential factor. Notably, a robust positive correlation was observed between life skills and career planning, indicating a significant relationship between these two domains. The results also demonstrated a positive association between college students' learning ability and their capacity for effective career planning. In other words, positive relationships were observed among college students' life skills, learning ability, and career planning.

Keywords: life skills, learning abilities, career planning, Chinese college students, program

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1. Introduction

Life skills, learning ability, and career planning are essential components of an individual's comprehensive quality. Cultivating life skills, learning ability, and career planning is crucial for enhancing college students' psychological well-being and comprehensive competence. Students who master life skills, learning abilities, and promising career planning abilities can adapt quickly and give play to their advantages in the face of social challenges and changes, thus improving the quality of life and job satisfaction. Life skills are indispensable for college students, as they can enhance personal competitiveness and facilitate individual distinction in academic pursuits and job searches. Moreover, life skills empower individuals to navigate practical challenges within and beyond campus boundaries, fostering independence while reducing reliance on others. Furthermore, life skills serve as instruments that reflect an individual's values, beliefs, and habits, contributing to problem-solving aptitude. The process of comprehending and applying life skills represents a transformative journey for college students to explore themselves to foster growth and maturation. A holistic college experience entails the management of emotions, stress release, and attaining a balanced lifestyle – all achievable through mastery of specific life skills (Nair & Fahimirad., 2019). The significance of life skills for college students lies in their capacity to promote autonomy, competitiveness, and problem-solving prowess, facilitate self-discovery, aid in adapting to changes, and ultimately contribute to mental well-being.

Learning abilities is indispensable for students' personal growth and development, as it serves as a vital tool for adapting to dynamic changes, enhancing efficiency in attaining personal and professional objectives, and fostering self-assurance and interpersonal relationships. In today's rapidly evolving world, acquiring new knowledge and skills has become imperative. Individuals with robust learning capabilities can swiftly adapt to such transformations by continuously updating their knowledge base and skill set to tackle emerging challenges effectively. Students with solid learning abilities can acquire and master novel information more efficiently, enabling them to promptly apply it in practical contexts while augmenting their overall learning efficacy (Shcherbakov et al., 2017). Through active engagement in educational pursuits, individuals are empowered to surmount obstacles hindering progress toward desired goals. Furthermore, the aptitude for acquiring knowledge contributes significantly towards improving interpersonal relationships by enabling individuals to assume leadership roles within groups and engage others effectively through sharing newfound insights.

Career planning is pivotal in helping students clarify their career objectives, enhance employability, bolster self-assurance, avert vocational ambiguity, and adapt to the dynamic workplace landscape. By engaging in career planning, students can gain insights into their strengths and weaknesses to formulate a tailored career development blueprint. Furthermore, it aids them in honing their vocational skills and augmenting their overall competence, amplifying their job market competitiveness and facilitating desirable employment opportunities (Fithroni et al., 2022). Consequently, through meticulous career planning endeavors, individuals are empowered to ascertain the trajectory of their professional growth while fortifying their self-belief to confront forthcoming challenges with unwavering confidence. Moreover, this strategic approach obviates occupational perplexity and saves valuable time and energy by guiding students towards well-aligned paths early on. Henceforth, students must craft comprehensive career plans early while continuously refining and optimizing these strategies.

In summary, students with proficiency in life skills, learning abilities, and effective career planning can swiftly adapt and leverage their strengths when confronted with societal challenges and transformations, enhancing their quality of life and job satisfaction. Therefore, this study employed a descriptive research methodology to investigate Chinese college students' life skills, learning ability, and career planning. It holds immense significance and value in promoting holistic student development, improving educational quality, fostering social adaptability, and nurturing future leaders.

2. Method

The study employed a descriptive methodology to investigate Chinese college students' life skills, learning ability, and career planning. The data for this investigation were collected through a survey to explore these aspects among Chinese college students. The study included a total of 425 undergraduate students majoring in liberal arts and sciences from Fuyang Normal University in China, encompassing first-year students, sophomores, juniors, and seniors hailing from both rural and urban areas. To ensure sample representativeness, the researchers employed a random sampling method that adhered to randomness, fairness, transparency, and repeatability principles. In this study, questionnaires were employed as the primary instruments for data collection, encompassing personal information and three specific types: the Life Skills Survey Tool (LiSST), the College Student Learning Ability Questionnaire, and the Career Planning Questionnaire. A total of 103 items were evaluated using a 4-Likert scale. To ensure reliability, a pilot study involving 30 participants was conducted to assess the validity of the questionnaire, which yielded satisfactory levels of reliability.

The data for this study was collected using Questionnaire Star. Due to its robust features and user-friendly design, this widely adopted online survey platform has gained popularity in various sectors, including enterprises, universities, and individual users. Firstly, the research tools and questionnaire preparation stage involved inviting experts and advisers to provide repeated demonstrations of the research design, research instruments, and ethical considerations. Subsequently, after obtaining approval from the president of Fuyang Normal University to conduct the study, the questionnaire was selected as the research instrument. Secondly, the questionnaire release and survey implementation stage were carried out through the Questionnaire Star platform. Finally, data collection and analysis were conducted, followed by proposing a plan based on statistical results to enhance life skills, learning ability, and career planning among Chinese college students.

The researcher employed quantitative data analysis techniques to interpret the gathered data, encompassing various essential statistical procedures. Firstly, descriptive statistics such as composition, mean values, and standard deviation were utilized to succinctly summarize student responses about life skills, learning abilities, career plans, and background information about respondents. Secondly, Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to explore potential relationships between life skills, learning ability, and career planning. The ethical considerations primarily revolve around obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality, and maintaining anonymity. Participants were selected through random sampling, and their informed consent was duly obtained. A comprehensive consent form was provided at the outset of the questionnaire to ensure strict adherence to principles of confidentiality and anonymity. Furthermore, before commencing the survey, respondents were explicitly apprised that this study entailed an extensive data collection process devoid of hidden motives or intentions.

3. Results and Discussion

Table 1

Summary Table on Life Skills

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Positive Mindset	2.99	Often true of me	4
Interpersonal Skills	3.14	Often true of me	2
Higher Order Thinking Skills	3.07	Often true of me	3
Community Mindset	3.17	Often true of me	1
Composite Mean	3.09	Often true of me	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Always true of me; 2.50 – 3.49 = Often true of me; 1.50 – 2.49 = Sometimes true of me; 1.00 - 1.49 = Almost Never true of me

Table 1 summarizes life skills, covering four categories: Positive Mindset, Interpersonal Skills, higher-order thinking Skills, and Community Mindset. The weighted mean values for each category range from 2.99 to 3.17, indicating the respondents' consistently high proficiency in various life skills. Additionally, the composite mean for all life skills categories is calculated as 3.09, suggesting an overall commendable mastery of essential life skills by participants who frequently exhibit a positive mindset, practical interpersonal abilities, advanced cognitive

capabilities, and strong community engagement.

The Community Mindset category demonstrated the highest composite mean (3.17), ranking first among the life skills categories, indicating that respondents exhibit a superior level of proficiency in community mindset compared to other life skills on average. Interpersonal skills, ranking second among life skills categories with a composite mean of 3.14, signify respondents' proficiency in effective communication, active listening, collaborative teamwork, appreciation for others' contributions, conflict resolution through understanding needs and compromises, as well as respect for diverse opinions. According to Gan et al. (2022), Asian students exhibit a strong recognition of the positive impact of higher education on their behaviors, attitudes, values, social responsibility, adherence to personal values, interpersonal skills development and respect for diverse opinions and perspectives. As presented in Table 1, the respondents' weighted mean for higher-order thinking skills was 3.07, ranking third among the four life skills. This suggests that they exhibit critical thinking by gathering diverse information and questioning assumptions, distinguishing between fact and assumption, identifying obstacles to their goals, considering long-term consequences in decision-making while seeking advice, and demonstrating innovative thinking by practically applying new ideas and creating solutions to challenges. Within the table, Positive Mindset ranked last with a mean of 2.99, indicating that students often perceive themselves as valuable individuals who express opinions even when facing disagreement even if they dislike them. The results confirm a previous study by Yang and Chen (2018), revealing that Chinese college students have advantages in higher-order thinking ability and show great enthusiasm for academic research and exchange activities.

Table 2
Summary Table on Learning Ability

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Meta-Cognitive Skills	3.02	Agree	4
Information Processing Capability	3.05	Agree	2
Collaborative Learning Ability	3.07	Agree	1
Autonomous Learning Ability	3.02	Agree	4
Creative Thinking Ability	3.02	Agree	4
Composite Mean	3.04	Agree	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 = Agree; 1.50 – 2.49 = Disagree; 1.00 - 1.49 = Strongly Disagree

Table 2 provides a comprehensive overview of the respondents' perceptions regarding learning ability across multiple dimensions, encompassing meta-cognitive skills, information processing capacity, collaborative learning proficiency, autonomous learning capability, and creative thinking aptitude. The composite mean score of 3.04 indicates a consensus concerning the summarized facets of learning ability. Among the indicators, collaborative learning ability received the highest weighted mean of 3.07, ranking first and indicating a strong emphasis on and proficiency in engaging with peers and instructors to solve problems, discuss concepts, and achieve shared learning objectives. Collaborative learning fosters an environment of cooperation and knowledge exchange, thereby enhancing individuals' learning experiences significantly. Furthermore, information processing capability ranked second with a mean score of 3.05, highlighting the respondents' adeptness in effectively utilizing diverse learning resources and modern technology for efficient information processing and organization. The findings are consistent with those of Peng et al. (2021), indicating that college students are strongly inclined towards collaborative learning, recognize its significance, and frequently enhance their knowledge through such an approach during the actual learning process. Moreover, from Hou's (2015) perspective, the results demonstrate that college students exhibit a high level of information processing ability, which is continually improving.

Meanwhile, meta-cognitive skills, autonomous learning ability, and creative thinking ability are tied for the third-highest level of agreement with a mean score of 3.02. This suggests that respondents have demonstrated competence in reflecting on their learning processes, managing their learning independently, and engaging in critical and innovative thinking within their educational pursuits. Li (2021) discussed how metacognitive skills contribute to students' lifelong learning; however, based on current practical experiences, there needs to be a higher overall level of self-control ability, adaptive ability, and metacognitive skills among students. Additionally, Xia (2017) examined the cultivation of college students' autonomous learning abilities and found numerous issues with

it at a satisfactory level. These problems are not solely attributed to the students but are closely linked to social and campus environments.

Table 3
Summary Table on Career Planning

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Cognition of Career Planning	3.04	Agree	2
Environment Analysis of Career Planning	2.99	Agree	3
Goals Setting of Career Planning	2.93	Agree	5
Action Strategy of Career Planning	2.96	Agree	4
Corrective Feedback on Career planning	3.08	Agree	1
Composite Mean	3.00	Agree	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 = Agree; 1.50 – 2.49 = Disagree; 1.00 - 1.49 = Strongly Disagree

Table 3 presents the summary of career planning based on five key indicators, namely cognitive understanding, environmental analysis, goal setting, action strategies, and corrective feedback, is presented in Table 3. The composite mean score of 3.00 indicates a high level of consensus regarding the summarized aspects of career planning.

From the data presented, corrective feedback on career planning emerged as the top-ranked factor with a mean score of 3.08, signifying respondents' high value on adaptability and their willingness to adjust career plans in response to changing circumstances or self-perception. Cognition of career planning is followed closely by the second indicator, attaining a mean score of 3.04, which indicates a robust understanding of personal values, interests, personality traits, and abilities when making career choices. The analysis of environmental factors influencing career planning secured the third position with a mean score of 2.99, underscoring individuals' awareness regarding current trends in career development, sought-after occupations, and employment conditions. Zhang and Tian (2018) conducted pertinent research on college students' approach to career planning and discovered that these students excel in critical thinking and synthesizing information during this process. They also emphasize active participation in practical activities to enhance professional skills and overall competence while ensuring alignment between planned career goals and personal interests/abilities for feasibility.

The cognition of career planning ranked second among the five indicators, with a mean score of 3.04, signifying a comprehensive understanding of personal values, interests, personality traits, and abilities about career choices. The analysis of the career planning environment secured the third position with a mean score of 2.99, highlighting individuals' awareness regarding current trends in career development, high-demand occupations, and the employment landscape. Meanwhile, goal setting for career planning obtained the fourth rank, while action strategy was placed fifth. From a service perspective, Wang (2018) elucidated the issues inherent in college students' career planning and expounded on the multifaceted trajectory of their career planning development. It has been observed that college students generally exhibit a high level of cognitive understanding towards career planning, which is influenced by various factors such as personal traits, educational background, family environment, and social experiences. About action strategies in career planning, college students emphasize short-term objectives that are concrete and adaptable. Some students formulate action plans based on their specific vocational aspirations. In contrast, others effectively utilize online resources and information technology platforms to acquire pertinent occupational information and explore developmental opportunities through online career planning platforms, social media networks, and professional forums (Ye & Ma, 2020).

Table 4 presents the association between life skills and learning ability, demonstrating a robust positive correlation; the resulting p-values were statistically significant ($p < \alpha$). This indicates a strong relationship, suggesting that higher levels of life skills assessment are associated with improved learning ability. Shen and Ouyang et al. (2017) explored the theoretical foundation and significance of life skills education, emphasizing the importance of individuals in the new era possessing relevant professional knowledge and skills, enhanced comprehensive qualities, strong learning abilities, adeptness in collaboration, and a propensity for innovation. These attributes constitute essential 'life skills' for students to effectively address practical problems and challenges

in real-life situations and work environments.

Table 4

Relationship Between Life Skills and Learning Ability

Positive Mindset	r-value	p-value	Interpretation
Positive Mindset	.780**	0.000	Highly Significant
Interpersonal Skills	.686**	0.000	Highly Significant
Higher Order Thinking Skills	.700**	0.000	Highly Significant
Community Mindset	.721**	0.000	Highly Significant
Self-Evaluation	.712**	0.000	Highly Significant
Interpersonal Skills			
Goal Setting	.713**	0.000	Highly Significant
Environment Structuring	.685**	0.000	Highly Significant
Task Strategies and Time Management	.737**	0.000	Highly Significant
Help Seeking	.707**	0.000	Highly Significant
Self-Evaluation	.694**	0.000	Highly Significant
Higher Order Thinking Skills			
Goal Setting	.767**	0.000	Highly Significant
Environment Structuring	.724**	0.000	Highly Significant
Task Strategies and Time Management	.722**	0.000	Highly Significant
Help Seeking	.712**	0.000	Highly Significant
Self-Evaluation	.728**	0.000	Highly Significant
Community Mindset			
Goal Setting	.717**	0.000	Highly Significant
Environment Structuring	.711**	0.000	Highly Significant
Task Strategies and Time Management	.749**	0.000	Highly Significant
Help Seeking	.680**	0.000	Highly Significant
Self-Evaluation	.683**	0.000	Highly Significant

Legend: Significant at p-value < 0.01

Table 5

Relationship Between Life Skills and Career Planning

Positive Mindset	r-value	p-value	Interpretation
Cognition of Career Planning	.709**	0.000	Highly Significant
Environment Analysis of Career Planning	.675**	0.000	Highly Significant
Goals Setting of Career Planning	.695**	0.000	Highly Significant
Action Strategy of Career Planning	.694**	0.000	Highly Significant
Corrective Feedback on Career planning	.678**	0.000	Highly Significant
Interpersonal Skills			
Cognition of Career Planning	.687**	0.000	Highly Significant
Environment Analysis of Career Planning	.643**	0.000	Highly Significant
Goals Setting of Career Planning	.636**	0.000	Highly Significant
Action Strategy of Career Planning	.663**	0.000	Highly Significant
Corrective Feedback on Career planning	.687**	0.000	Highly Significant
Higher Order Thinking Skills			
Cognition of Career Planning	.706**	0.000	Highly Significant
Environment Analysis of Career Planning	.658**	0.000	Highly Significant
Goals Setting of Career Planning	.672**	0.000	Highly Significant
Action Strategy of Career Planning	.692**	0.000	Highly Significant
Corrective Feedback on Career planning	.678**	0.000	Highly Significant
Community Mindset			
Cognition of Career Planning	.718**	0.000	Highly Significant
Environment Analysis of Career Planning	.665**	0.000	Highly Significant
Goals Setting of Career Planning	.641**	0.000	Highly Significant
Action Strategy of Career Planning	.668**	0.000	Highly Significant
Corrective Feedback on Career planning	.691**	0.000	Highly Significant

Legend: Significant at p-value < 0.01

The association between life skills and career planning is depicted in Table 5. The computed r-values indicate a robust positive correlation, with resulting p-values below the alpha level, indicating a significant relationship. It suggests that better assessment of life skills leads to improved career planning outcomes. Jin and Ji (2021) examined the correlation between college students' learning ability, practical skills, and employability to identify critical factors influencing job seekers' employability. Strategies were proposed to address college graduates'

employability weaknesses by targeting these influential factors. Notably, within the framework of employability structure, a significant association was found between college students' learning ability and overall career planning. Furthermore, Chen (2021) discovered a correlation between students' perception of career planning and their life skills due to inadequate life skills education in China.

Table 6 presents the association between life skills and career planning. The computed r-values indicate a robust positive correlation, with resulting p-values below the alpha level, signifying a significant relationship. These findings reveal that individuals with enhanced learning abilities exhibit superior skills and awareness in personal career planning. In promoting higher education, internationalization, and market-oriented student employment, Li (2017) investigates the enhancement of college students' learning ability through career planning. The findings reveal a positive correlation between college students' learning ability and active engagement in career planning; individuals with more vital learning abilities demonstrate exceptional skills and awareness in personal career planning. These results are consistent with Cao's (2019) study, which also highlights a significant association between students' lifelong learning ability, interpersonal skills, and capacity for career planning. It is argued that individuals who cultivate lifelong learning habits are better equipped to adapt to rapidly changing work environments and emerging professional demands.

Table 6
Relationship Between Learning Ability and Career Planning

Meta-Cognitive Skills	r-value	p-value	Interpretation
Cognition of Career Planning	.737**	0.000	Highly Significant
Environment Analysis of Career Planning	.708**	0.000	Highly Significant
Goals Setting of Career Planning	.793**	0.000	Highly Significant
Action Strategy of Career Planning	.762**	0.000	Highly Significant
Corrective Feedback on Career planning	.695**	0.000	Highly Significant
Information Processing Capability			
Cognition of Career Planning	.715**	0.000	Highly Significant
Environment Analysis of Career Planning	.684**	0.000	Highly Significant
Goals Setting of Career Planning	.722**	0.000	Highly Significant
Action Strategy of Career Planning	.721**	0.000	Highly Significant
Corrective Feedback on Career planning	.695**	0.000	Highly Significant
Collaborative Learning Ability			
Cognition of Career Planning	.789**	0.000	Highly Significant
Environment Analysis of Career Planning	.719**	0.000	Highly Significant
Goals Setting of Career Planning	.763**	0.000	Highly Significant
Action Strategy of Career Planning	.772**	0.000	Highly Significant
Corrective Feedback on Career planning	.729**	0.000	Highly Significant
Autonomous Learning Ability			
Cognition of Career Planning	.717**	0.000	Highly Significant
Environment Analysis of Career Planning	.687**	0.000	Highly Significant
Goals Setting of Career Planning	.722**	0.000	Highly Significant
Action Strategy of Career Planning	.735**	0.000	Highly Significant
Corrective Feedback on Career planning	.719**	0.000	Highly Significant
Creative Thinking Ability			
Cognition of Career Planning	.765**	0.000	Highly Significant
Environment Analysis of Career Planning	.696**	0.000	Highly Significant
Goals Setting of Career Planning	.748**	0.000	Highly Significant
Action Strategy of Career Planning	.786**	0.000	Highly Significant
Corrective Feedback on Career planning	.721**	0.000	Highly Significant

Legend: Significant at p-value < 0.01

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study findings revealed that respondents demonstrated high proficiency in life skills, including a positive mindset, strong interpersonal skills, higher-order thinking abilities, and a community-oriented mindset. However, their inclination towards higher-order thinking skills and maintaining positivity was comparatively lower. The respondents consistently exhibited five learning abilities: metacognitive ability, information processing ability, collaborative learning ability, autonomous learning ability, and creative thinking ability. Among these abilities, collaborative learning stood out as the highest level achieved by the respondents. The elaborator displayed a

positive and comprehensive attitude towards career planning and management encompassing cognition, environmental analysis, goal setting, action strategies, and corrective feedback. Chinese universities should establish mechanisms to enhance student's life skills and career planning abilities, providing dedicated funding and logistical support. Educators should employ innovative teaching methods, continuously update their knowledge base, and impart relevant skills to foster a deep understanding of the significance of these abilities. Students should prioritize personal growth by recognizing the importance of life skills, learning capabilities, and career planning while actively cultivating independent learning and social skills. Moreover, school administrators could train teachers in life skills and career planning while actively seeking parents' opinions on developing these abilities. Recognizing the crucial role of parents in this process, an integrated educational loop can be established to cultivate these essential skills.

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